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ABSTRACT

Five hundred ninety-five students enrolled in undergraduate classes in psychology and business administration at the University of Maryland completed an anonymous questionnaire inquiring about their use or nonuse of marijuana, their reasons for using or not using the substance, and their attitudes toward the legal penalties for marijuana possession and toward the question of legalization. The availability of some comparable data from two previous unpublished surveys, made in 1967 and 1968, made it possible to examine trends in responses to some of the items. The study reveals trends in the direction of (1) more widespread use of marijuana among undergraduate students, (2) a greater increase in marijuana use among female respondents than among males (although it remains true that a larger proportion of males than of females has tried the drug) and (3) more widespread feeling that the legal penalties for marijuana possession are too severe and that marijuana use should be made legal. There is also less extensive use among freshmen than among upperclassmen and more common use among students living off-campus and not with their families than among dormitory residents or students living with their families. A sample questionnaire and statistical tables are included. (Author/SW)

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TRENDS IN MARIJUANA USE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

James D. McKenzie

Research Report #3-70
Counseling Center
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland

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Abstract

Five hundred ninety-five students enrolled in undergraduate classes in psychology and business administration completed an anonymous questionnaire inquiring about their use or nonuse of marijuana, their reasons for using or not using the substance, and their attitudes toward the legal penalties for marijuana possession and toward the question of legalization. The availability of some comparable data from two previous unpublished surveys, made in 1967 and 1968, made it possible to examine trends in responses to some of the items.

The study reveals trends in the direction of (1) more widespread use of marijuana among undergraduate students, (2) a greater increase in marijuana use among female respondents than among males (although it remains true that a larger proportion of males than of females has tried the drug) and (3) more widespread feeling that the legal penalties for marijuana possession are too severe and that marijuana use should be made legal. In addition, the data indicate that (1) marijuana use is less extensive among freshmen than among upperclassmen, (2) use of the drug is more common among students living off-campus and not with their families than among dormitory residents or students living with their families, (3) a larger proportion of Arts and Sciences students than of students in Education or Business and Public Administration has tried marijuana, (4) the reason most frequently given by nonusers for their nonuse is that they have no desire to experience the effects of marijuana, (5) and the reason most frequently given by users for their use is to "get high, feel good".

TRENDS IN MARIJUANA USE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE
STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

James D. McKenzie
University of Maryland

For the past three years, samples of University of Maryland undergraduate students have been surveyed with respect to their use or nonuse of marijuana. The results of the three investigations provide some data on trends in the use of the substance and in attitudes regarding legal penalties for marijuana possession and the question of legalization of the drug. Data are also available on students' reported reasons for use or nonuse and on the relationship between experience with marijuana and such variables as place of residence, college and class.

The same procedure was used in each of the three surveys. A number of instructors administered an anonymous one-page questionnaire to their students at the end of a class period. The questionnaire could be completed in about one minute. The student filled it out (unless he had already done so in another class) and deposited it at the front of the room as he left. These conditions would seem to insure honesty in responding.

The 1969 and 1968 questionnaires were almost identical (see Appendix), so that comparable data are available for the two years. The 1967 questionnaire was substantially different, however, and provided data only on the extent of the respondents' experience with marijuana. The 1967 subjects were not asked to indicate their reasons for use or nonuse, nor were they asked about their attitudes toward legal penalties nor toward the matter of legalization.

The 1967 (N=550) and 1968 (N=662) questionnaires were administered only to students in undergraduate psychology classes; the 1969 sample (N=595) included students in two upper-level undergraduate business courses as well as students in five psychology classes. Table I presents the composition of the 1969 sample according to college. (All figures, here and elsewhere, are percentages.)

It should be noted that the College of Arts and Sciences is over-represented in the 1969 sample (as it was in the other two samples).

Results

Table II presents responses to question A for the male respondents, the female respondents, and the total sample. In addition to the percentages endorsing each of the seven alternative responses, results are presented for students who have had no experience with marijuana (alternatives 1 and 2 combined), those who have had some experience with the drug (alternatives 3 through 7 combined), and those who not only have tried marijuana but also intend to use it again (alternatives 4, 6 and 7 combined).

It will be noted that the percentage of students who have tried marijuana (some of them just once) has risen from 15.0 in 1967 to 23.9 in 1968 to 35.6 in 1969. In like manner, the percentage who have used the drug and intend to continue using it has increased from 10.9 to 15.4 to 25.4. While the proportion of experienced respondents has increased for both sexes, and in the most recent survey remains greater for males than for females, it is interesting that the increase over the three years is sharper for the female respondents. For example, the increase, from 1968 to 1969, in the proportion of students who smoke

TABLE I

Composition of 1969 Sample According to College

<u>COLLEGE</u>	<u>% OF SAMPLE</u>
Agriculture	0.2
Arts and Sciences	54.0
Business and Public Administration	12.9
Education	20.6
Engineering	2.2
Graduate	0.7
Home Economics	3.2
Nursing	1.8
Intermediate Registration	0.3
Physical Education	1.3
University College	0.5
Pharmacy	0.2
Architecture	1.8

TABLE II

Response to Question A and Sex

<u>Response</u>	<u>MALES</u>			<u>FEMALES</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>		
	1969 (N=264)	1968 (N=259)	1967 (N=177)	1969 (N=331)	1968 (N=403)	1967 (N=373)	1969 (N=595)	1968 (N=662)	1967 (N=550)
1	45.5	(55.2)	(48.0)	58.6	(72.4)	(81.2)	52.8	(65.7)	(70.5)
2	10.6	(8.5)	(23.1)	12.1	(11.5)	(10.1)	11.4	(10.5)	(14.3)
3	7.2	(7.3)	(4.5)	4.2	(4.5)	(2.6)	5.5	(5.6)	(3.2)
4	3.8	(2.3)	(6.7)	2.4	(1.5)	(0.8)	3.0	(2.0)	(2.7)
5	5.7	(5.8)	(1.6)	3.9	(1.0)	(0.5)	4.7	(2.9)	(0.9)
6	18.9	(11.2)	(9.6)	11.5	(5.7)	(2.9)	14.8	(7.8)	(5.0)
7	8.0	(9.3)	(6.2)	7.3	(3.2)	(1.6)	7.6	(5.6)	(3.0)
1 + 2	56.1	(63.7)	(71.1)	70.7	(83.9)	(91.4)	64.2	(76.2)	(84.9)
3 - 7	43.6	(35.9)	(28.2)	29.3	(15.9)	(8.5)	35.6	(23.9)	(15.0)
4 + 6 + 7	30.7	(22.8)	(22.5)	21.2	(10.4)	(5.3)	25.4	(15.4)	(10.9)

marijuana "regularly" (at least once every two weeks), from 5.6 to 7.6, is due entirely to the increase in the number of females who endorse this alternative (from 3.2 to 7.3); the proportion of males endorsing this response declines slightly (from 9.3 to 8.0).

Table III depicts responses to question A as a function of class membership. (The 1969 and 1968 samples included 12 and 15 students respectively who indicated their class as "other". Because of their small numbers, these subgroups are not included in the table.)

It will be noted that a substantially smaller percentage of freshmen has had experience with marijuana than have upperclassmen. For all classes, the percentage with some experience (alternatives 3-7 combined) increases from 1968 to 1969. Similarly, the percentage of students who might be defined as "users" (those who intend to continue smoking) increases for all classes except the freshman class. The percentages are highest for the sophomore group than for the others, while they are slightly lower for the seniors than for the juniors. This latter finding, if it is reliable, may be attributable to the fact that most of the students in the two business classes were seniors (see later discussion).

Table IV presents responses to question A according to the respondent's place of residence. These data are available only for the 1969 sample.

Thus a higher proportion of students who live off-campus but not with their families have had experience with marijuana (48.7) than of students who live on-campus (33.2) or off-campus with their families (24.6).

TABLE III

Response to Question A and Class Membership

RESPONSE	1969 (N=94)	1968 (N=191)	1969 (N=151)	1968 (N=95)	1969 (N=208)	1968 (N=183)	1969 (N=133)	1968 (N=175)
1	63.8	73.3	51.0	61.1	48.1	60.1	52.8	64.6
2	11.7	6.8	10.6	12.7	12.0	11.5	12.0	12.0
3	6.4	4.7	4.6	2.1	5.3	8.2	6.0	6.3
4	2.1	2.1	5.3	3.2	2.9	1.1	0.8	1.7
5	3.2	1.6	2.0	3.2	6.7	4.4	6.0	2.9
6	5.3	5.2	15.9	10.5	16.8	9.3	18.0	8.6
7	6.4	6.3	10.6	7.4	8.2	5.5	4.5	4.0
1+2	75.5	80.1	61.6	73.8	60.1	71.6	64.6	76.6
3-7	24.4	19.9	38.4	26.4	39.9	28.5	35.3	23.5
4+6+7	13.8	13.6	31.8	21.1	27.9	15.9	23.3	14.3

TABLE IV
Response to Question A and Class Membership

<u>RESIDENCE</u>			
<u>Response</u>	<u>1 (N=208)</u>	<u>2 (N=188)</u>	<u>3 (N=198)</u>
1	54.3	63.8	40.2
2	12.5	11.7	10.6
3	5.3	4.8	6.5
4	2.4	2.7	4.0
5	3.4	4.3	6.5
6	13.9	9.6	20.6
7	8.2	3.2	11.1
1+2	66.8	75.5	50.8
3-7	33.2	24.6	48.7
4+6+7	24.5	15.5	35.7

Table V presents responses to questions A as a function of college. Data are presented for only three colleges (Arts and Sciences, Business and Public Administration, and Education) because students in the other colleges are not represented in sufficient numbers (See Table I) to warrant their inclusion. These data are available only for the 1969 sample.

The above table demonstrates that a much larger proportion of Arts and Sciences students has had experience with marijuana (44.8) than of students in the other two colleges (18.2 for BPA, 18.7 for Education).

Table VI depicts responses to question B for those students who have not had experience with marijuana and those who have used it but indicate that they do not intend to do so in the future. (A question might be raised about the appropriateness of combining these two groups.) Data are presented for the 1969 and 1968 samples. Inasmuch as the respondent could endorse as many as three alternatives, the percentages total more than 100.

It is notable that the most frequently endorsed reason for nonuse is, "No desire to experience its effects." While this might be a plausible response for those students who have tried the drug and decided not to use it again, it is possible that, for many of the respondents who have no experience with marijuana, this may be the "easiest" response to make when the most accurate response would be some combination of the other alternatives. Other popular responses are "illegality" and "reports or experience) of harmful psychological effects." It is interesting that only a very small percentage (5.2) state that they have not

TABLE V
Response to Question A and College (1969)

<u>COLLEGE</u>	<u>RESPONSE</u>								
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>1+2</u>	<u>3-7</u> <u>4+6+7</u>
A&S (N=323)	42.4	12.7	5.6	4.3	5.3	20.0	9.6	55.1	44.8 33.9
BPA (N=77)	61.0	9.1	6.5	0.0	5.2	13.0	5.2	70.1	29.9 18.2
ED (N=123)	59.3	13.0	4.9	1.6	4.1	10.6	6.5	72.3	27.6 18.7

TABLE VI
Response to Question B

<u>Response</u>	<u>1969 (N=443)</u>	<u>1968 (N=560)</u>
1	36.1	(42.1)
2	23.3	(27.9)
3	16.3	(12.6)
4	13.1	(16.4)
5	36.6	(34.6)
6	5.2	(6.2)
7	65.7	(66.1)

(or will not) use marijuana because of difficulty in obtaining it.

Table VII presents responses to question C for those students who have used marijuana and indicate that they plan to do so again. Data are presented for the 1969 and 1968 samples. Again the percentages total more than 100 because the student could select as many as three alternatives.

By far the most popular reason given for using the drug is, "Get high, feel good" (72.9). Next in order of popularity are "Experience things more vividly" (51.7), "Relieve general anxiety, tension, nervousness and/or irritability" (27.2) and "Explore inner self" (22.5). It would be interesting to determine whether the "Relieve general anxiety..." response would be given more frequently by a group of drug-oriented respondents than by a group of casual smokers. It is not possible to identify a drug-oriented group in this sample; certainly an individual may smoke marijuana "regularly (at least once every two weeks)" and still be casual in his use of the substance.

Table VIII depicts responses to question D, which asks about the student's reaction to the legal penalties for marijuana possession. Data, from the 1969 and 1968 surveys, are presented for the male respondents, the female respondents, and the total sample.

This table demonstrates a substantial shift from 1968 to 1969 in the direction of a more widespread feeling that the existing legal penalties for marijuana possession are too severe (from 56.7 to 70.5). The following two tables indicate that freshmen are somewhat less inclined to express this opinion than upperclassmen (Table IX) and that one's experience with marijuana is related to one's opinion in this matter

TABLE VII
Response to Question C

<u>Response</u>	<u>1969 (N=151)</u>	<u>1968 (N=102)</u>
1	22.5	(26.5)
2	3.3	(4.9)
3	14.6	(18.6)
4	9.9	(5.9)
5	27.2	(23.5)
6	4.6	(4.9)
7	0.7	(0.0)
8	51.7	(54.9)
9	16.6	(21.6)
10	15.9	(8.8)
11	0.7	(0.0)
12	6.0	(5.9)
13	0.7	(2.9)
14	72.9	(61.8)

TABLE VIII

Response to Question D and Sex

Response	<u>MALES</u>		<u>FEMALES</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	
	1969(N=254)	1968(N=253)	1969(N=318)	1968(N=392)	1969(N=592)	1968(N=645)
1	70.1	(62.5)	70.8	(53.1)	70.5	(56.7)
2	20.1	(23.7)	20.8	(31.9)	20.5	(28.7)
3	9.8	(13.8)	8.5	(15.1)	9.1	(14.6)

TABLE IX

Response to Question D and Class

	<u>FRESH.</u>	<u>SOPH.</u>	<u>JR.</u>	<u>SR.</u>	<u>OTHER</u>
Response	(N=90,186)	(N=147,93)	(N=196,182)	(N=129,167)	(N=12,14)
1	62.2 (48.9)	72.1 (59.1)	75.0 (58.8)	69.0 (61.7)	50.0 (57.1)
2	28.9 (36.0)	22.4 (25.8)	15.3 (26.9)	20.9 (25.1)	8.3 (21.4)
3	8.9 (15.1)	5.4 (15.1)	9.7 (14.3)	10.1 (13.2)	41.7 (21.4)

(Table X) although, in the latter connection, it is interesting that nearly half (49.0) of those who have not used marijuana and do not intend to do so nevertheless feel that the penalties are overly severe.

Table XI presents responses to question E, which asks the respondent whether he believes that marijuana use should be made legal. Data, from the 1969 and 1968 surveys, are presented for the male respondents, the female respondents, the male respondents, the female respondents, and the total sample.

Table XI indicates that nearly half (48.0) the respondents favor legalization of marijuana, while an additional 26.3 are uncertain. It is notable that the item did not specify under what conditions the drug would be made available if it were legal. Had such conditions been spelled out, it seems likely that some of the uncertain group -- perhaps even a substantial proportion -- would have stated that they favored legalization. Only 25.7 are unequivocally opposed to legalization. These 1969 figures represent a marked shift from the 1968 results in the direction of a more general belief that marijuana use should be legal. The following two tables indicate that, again, freshmen are less inclined to favor legalization than are upperclassmen (Table XII) and that one's experience with the drug is related to one's opinion in this matter (Table XIII). In the second regard, it is notable that, of the respondents who have not tried marijuana and who have no intention of doing so, only 43.0 are clearly opposed to its legalization.

TABLE X

Response to Question D and Response to Question A

	QUESTION A						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<u>D</u>	<u>(N=300,425)</u>	<u>(N=66,68)</u>	<u>(N=29,35)</u>	<u>(N=17,13)</u>	<u>(N=28,18)</u>	<u>(N=89,52)</u>	<u>(N=45,37)</u>
1	49.0(39.5)	89.4(86.9)	82.8(71.4)	100.0(100.0)	85.7(77.8)	98.9(96.2)	100.0(100.0)
2	34.7(39.5)	7.6(8.8)	13.8(25.7)	0.0(0.0)	14.3(16.7)	0.0(1.9)	0.0(0.0)
3	16.3(15.1)	3.0(4.4)	3.4(2.9)	0.0(0.0)	0.0(5.6)	1.1(1.9)	0.0(0.0)

TABLE XI
Response to Question E and Sex

Response	<u>MALES</u>		<u>FEMALES</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	
	1969(N=257)	1968(N=255)	1969(N=322)	1968(N=400)	1969(N=579)	1968(N=658)
1	50.6	(43.1)	46.0	(34.0)	48.0	(37.7)
2	26.1	(28.2)	25.5	(38.5)	25.7	(34.5)
3	23.3	(28.6)	28.6	(27.5)	26.3	(27.8)

TABLE XII

Response to Question E and Class

Response	<u>FRESH.</u> (N=93,189)	<u>SOPH.</u> (N=148,93)	<u>JR.</u> (N=198,183)	<u>SR.</u> (N=130,172)	<u>OTHER</u> (N=12,15)
1	41.9 (29.1)	49.3 (41.8)	50.5 (39.3)	49.2 (44.2)	25.0 (33.3)
2	28.0 (39.2)	25.7 (29.0)	18.7 (33.9)	30.8 (30.2)	66.7 (53.3)
3	30.1 (31.7)	25.0 (29.0)	30.8 (26.8)	20.0 (25.6)	8.3 (13.3)

TABLE XIII

	Response to Question E and Response to Question A						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<u>0</u>	(N=305,432)	(N=67,69)	(N=30,37)	(N=18,13)	(N=28,18)	(N=89,52)	(N=44,37)
1	21.6 (22.7)	64.2 (68.1)	43.3 (45.9)	88.9 (53.8)	64.3 (61.1)	93.4 (69.2)	90.9 (86.5)
2	43.0 (47.9)	9.0 (8.7)	16.7 (13.5)	0.0 (15.4)	10.7 (16.7)	3.4 (5.8)	2.3 (2.7)
3	35.4 (29.4)	26.8 (23.2)	40.0 (40.5)	11.1 (30.8)	25.0 (22.2)	3.4 (25.0)	6.8 (10.8)

SUMMARY

This study reveals trends in the direction of (1) more widespread use of marijuana among undergraduate students, (2) a greater increase in use of the drug among female respondents than among males (although it remains true that a larger proportion of males than of females has tried the substance), and (3) more widespread feeling that the legal penalties for marijuana possession are too severe and that marijuana use should be made legal. In addition, the data indicate that (1) marijuana use is less extensive among freshmen than among upperclassmen, (2) use of the drug is more common among students living off-campus and not with their families than among dormitory residents or students living with their families, (3) a larger proportion of Arts and Sciences students than of students in Education or Business and Public Administration has tried marijuana, (4) the reason most frequently given by nonusers for their nonuse is that they have no desire to experience the effects of marijuana, and (5) the reason given most frequently by users for their use is to "get high, feel good."

APPENDIX - 1969 QUESTIONNAIRE

Sex: M (1) F (2) Class: Fresh (1) Soph (2) Jr (3) Sr. (4) Other (5)

Place of residence: Univ. Housing (1); Off-Campus (with Family) (2); Off-Campus (3)

College: _____

PLEASE DO NOT
COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IF YOU HAVE ALREADY DONE SO IN ANOTHER COURSE

CIRCLE THE NUMBERS OF YOUR RESPONSES.

A. I have used marijuana (or hashish):

- (1) never, and I do not intend to do so
- (2) never, but I would like to do so
- (3) once, but I do not intend to do so again
- (4) once, and I intend to do so again
- (5) several times, but I do not intend to do so again
- (6) several times, and I intend to do so again
- (7) regularly (at least once every two weeks)

IF YOU HAVE NOT USED MARIJUANA OR IF YOU HAVE USED IT BUT DO NOT INTEND TO DO SO AGAIN, PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION "B". OTHERWISE, ANSWER QUESTION "C".

B. I have not used marijuana, or I do not intend to do so again, for the following reason(s): (CIRCLE AS MANY AS THREE BUT NOT MORE THAN THREE.)

- (1) reports (or experience) of harmful psychological effects
- (2) reports (or experience) of harmful physical effects
- (3) observations of effects in others
- (4) urging or potential disapproval of parents, friends, etc.
- (5) illegality
- (6) difficulty in obtaining the substance
- (7) no desire to experience its effects

C. I use marijuana for the following reason(s): (CIRCLE AS MANY AS THREE BUT NO MORE. IF MORE THAN THREE APPLY, CHOOSE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT.)

- (1) explore inner self
- (2) for religious or mystical feeling
- (3) relieve boredom
- (4) feel less depressed or sad
- (5) relieve general anxiety, tension, nervousness and/or irritability
- (6) shut things out of my mind
- (7) prepare for stress
- (8) experience things more vividly
- (9) make a good mood last longer or make a fine feeling better
- (10) be more friendly, enhance sociability and/or be more loving
- (11) be like others I admire
- (12) go along with what others are doing
- (13) enjoy doing something illegal or "forbidden"
- (14) get high, feel good

D. I believe that the legal penalties for marijuana possession are:

- (1) too severe
- (2) about right
- (3) too lenient

E. It has been proposed that marijuana use be made legal. How do you feel?

- (1) agree
- (2) disagree
- (3) uncertain